

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-10 (cancelled).

Claim 11. (New): A process for the production of a mixture of mono-, di- and triesters of hydroxycarboxylic acids, said process comprising reacting hydroxycarboxylic acids or salts thereof with a mixture of alcohols corresponding to the formulas (I) $R^1\text{-OH}$ and (II) $R^2\text{-(C}_2\text{H}_4)_n\text{-OH}$, where R^1 and R^2 independently represent a saturated or unsaturated, branched or unbranched C_{6-22} alkyl group and n is a number of 1 to 20, wherein the compounds of formulas (I) and (II) are used in a ratio by weight of 10:1 to 1:1 and the hydroxycarboxylic acid is used in such quantities that the molar ratio of the free carboxyl groups of the hydroxycarboxylic acid to the free OH groups of the alcohols is at most 3.5:1.

Claim 12 (New): A process according to claim 11, wherein the alcohols of formulas (I) and (II) are used in a ratio by weight of 4:1 to 1:1.

Claim 13 (New): A process according to claim 11, wherein the alcohols of formulas (I) and (II) are used in a ratio by weight of 1:1.

Claim 14 (New): A process according to claim 11, wherein the hydroxycarboxylic acid is used in such quantities that the molar ratio of the free carboxyl groups of the hydroxycarboxylic acid to the free OH groups of the alcohols is at most 3:1.

Claim 15 (New): A process according to claim 11, wherein the reaction is carried out at temperatures of 150 to 170°C.

Claim 16 (New): A process according to claim 11, wherein the hydroxycarboxylic acid is

selected from the group consisting of lactic acid, tartaric acid, malic acid, citric acid and self-condensation products thereof.

Claim 17 (New): A process according to claim 16, wherein the hydroxycarboxylic acid is citric acid.

Claim 18 (New): A process according to claim 11, wherein the resulting mixture of hydroxycarboxylic acid esters contains 25 to 30% of monoesters, 30 to 40% of diesters, 5 to 15% by triesters, and up to 8% of free hydroxycarboxylic acid.

Claim 19 (New): A mixture of mono-, di- and triesters of hydroxycarboxylic acids, and optionally free, hydroxycarboxylic acid, the mixture comprising esters corresponding to the formula (III):



in which R', R'', R''' represent a hydrogen atom, a C₆₋₂₂ alkyl group, or an ethoxylated C₆₋₂₂ alkyl group, the ethoxylated alkyl groups containing 2 to 20 parts ethylene oxide per alkyl group, with the provisos that at least one of the substituents R', R'' and R''' represents such an ethoxylated alkyl group, and wherein the ratio of mono- to diesters in the mixture is 1:1 to 1:2.

Claim 20 (New): A mixture according to claim 19, wherein the ethoxylated alkyl groups contain 2 to 10 parts ethylene oxide per alkyl group.

Claim 21 (New): A mixture according to claim 19, wherein the hydroxycarboxylic acid is selected from the group consisting of lactic acid, tartaric acid, malic acid, citric acid and self-condensation products thereof.

Claim 22 (New): A mixture according to claim 19, wherein the hydroxycarboxylic acid is citric acid.

Claim 23 (New): A mixture according to claim 19, wherein the ethoxylated alkyl groups contain 2 to 10 parts ethylene oxide per alkyl group and the hydroxycarboxylic acid is citric acid.

Claim 24 (New): A mixture according to claim 19, consisting of 25 to 30% of monoesters, 30 to 40% of diesters, 5 to 15% by triesters and up to 8% of free hydroxycarboxylic acid.

Claim 25 (New): A cosmetic composition comprising
(A) one or more cosmetically active ingredients and
(B) a mixture of mono-, di- and triesters of hydroxycarboxylic acids, and optionally free, hydroxycarboxylic acid, the mixtures containing esters corresponding to the formula (III):



in which R', R'', R''' represent a hydrogen atom, a C₆₋₂₂ alkyl group, or an ethoxylated C₆₋₂₂ alkyl group, the ethoxylated alkyl groups containing 2 to 20 parts ethylene oxide per alkyl group, with the provisos that at least one of the substituents R', R'' and R''' represents such an ethoxylated alkyl group, and wherein the ratio of mono- to diesters in the mixture is 1:1 to 1:2.

Claim 26 (New): A cosmetic composition according to claim 25, wherein the ethoxylated alkyl groups of component (B) contain 2 to 10 parts ethylene oxide per alkyl group.

Claim 27 (New): A cosmetic composition according to claim 25, wherein the hydroxycarboxylic acid of component (B) is citric acid.

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Claim 28 (New): A cosmetic composition according to claim 25, wherein, in component (B), the ethoxylated alkyl groups containing 2 to 10 parts ethylene oxide per alkyl group and the hydroxycarboxylic acid is citric acid.

Claim 29 (New): A cosmetic composition according to claim 25, the mixture of component (B) consists of 25 to 30% of monoesters, 30 to 40% of diesters, 5 to 15% by triesters and up to 8% of free hydroxycarboxylic acid.

Claim 30 (New): A cosmetic composition according to claim 25, further comprising alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl oligoglycosides or fatty alcohol ethoxylates or mixtures thereof.